

Washington, when it then required two days and a half for the troops even from Baltimore to reach the threatened Capitol. Not to enlarge upon the considerations flowing from this view of the subject, it is sufficient to remark, that the peculiar adaptation of a rail road to the transportation of troops, is not the least of its good qualities; nor to be omitted in the estimate of its probable benefits to the community.

The peculiar condition of the Susquehannah river, in being a gentle stream for the far greater part of its descent from its sources to tide water, and rapid and turbulent during the last thirty miles of its course, early attracted the attention of the people of a part of Maryland, and gave rise to many plans for the removal, or evasion of the obstructions in the river: at first it was supposed that a canal along the bank of the river would promote the convenience of the descending trade, and afford a passage upwards to the return boats; and with a heavy expenditure of money, a canal was made upon the Eastern bank, from tide-water to the boundary-line of Maryland, with a view of continuing the ascending navigation, by constructing tow-paths along the shore. But the banks of the river upon the Pennsylvania side of the line, remain in the rough state in which nature formed them; and although it is possible that at some distant day, the rocky difficulties of the bank may be overcome by a continuous canal, with the permission and assistance of Pennsylvania; yet no plan is now formed for such an enterprize, and no reason exists to think that it will soon be undertaken. According to the report of the commissioners appointed by the Executive of Maryland, the difficulties of excavating a canal upon that shore, are nearly insurmountable; requiring such enormous expenditures, that many years must elapse before its construction, even if it will ever be made.

The next effort to improve the communication with the upper waters of the Susquehannah, was an act of the General Assembly, permitting the city of Baltimore to expend the sum of fifty thousand dollars, out of its corporate funds, in the removal of the rocks which impeded the navigation of the river. So anxious was that city to connect itself more closely with the heart of Pennsylvania, that the act was promptly accepted, and the money placed at the disposal of the commissioners named in the act.

These gentlemen superintended its expenditure faithfully and skilfully; and ceased from their labors at last, as it is understood, before the entire appropriation was exhausted, because they believed that the descending navigation was rendered sufficiently easy, and the prospect of obtaining an upward trade was hopeless.